/192 cont./

771 171 [177] This is precisely what constitutes the great interest of the Refugee Blacks' religious forms, which one finds again, besides, in large measure, mixed with Christian ideas, among all the Blacks of South America. They seem to point out a very important common background of conceptions common to the West African civilizations.

771 174 184 It is certainly not by chance if the various tribes of Refugee Blacks have adopted such close social and religious forms. One must assume the action of several strong personalities who knew, with an almost superhuman instinct, how to sift out from the jumble of beliefs brought by the rebel slaves what was necessary to the life of the new society; but this new religion would not have taken root in forms so stable and so coherent if all had not been intimately co[illegible]s of being in agreement on a minimum of common concepts.

It is important to observe that the Refugee Blacks, who borrowed most of their techniques from the Indians and Europeans, remained rigorously faithful in their beliefs and rituals to the African substratum, from which they drew a homogeneous and [177] living whole. Although the beliefs of the Indians are known to them in their main lines, they have borrowed almost nothing from them; on the other hand, it is certain that vague Christian recollections influenced the conception they have of the supreme god, Masa Gadu, and their moral and religious law. But they have been introduced into an African system of thought, and in fact the beliefs which directly influence individual and social life come in a straight line from the African earth.

772 [171] Metaphysical conceptions. Through the rituals of the Refugee Blacks appear /193/ metaphysical conceptions very comparable to those which have been noted in the populations of West Africa.

/193 cont./

772 The Refugee Blacks consider beings and things as distributed on several levels:

--The creator god;
--Lower gods;
--Ancestors;
--Men;
--Animals;
--Plants and inanimate things.

To each of these levels corresponds a level of life and a level of force (kaakiti). A higher force may act on a lower force, but not the reverse.

771 One may say that the cults of the Refugee Blacks have as their goal to capture the vital force of the gods and the ancestors and to bring it back to the level of men, giving them strength, luck, and fecundity. To thus increase one's vital force can be defined as good. Evil (negative magic, wisi) is, on the contrary, to capture the vital force of another man in order to increase one's own.

754 The idea that one has wisimã is that he uses a higher force (especially an ancestor's yɔrka) which he has succeeded in capturing by magic and in subjecting to his will in order to dominate someone else. Reduced to his own strength alone he could do nothing.

789 824 [772] The magic of the Refugee Blacks might allow one to believe that they think they act directly on men through the medium of plants to which magic virtues are attached. This would be a grave error; in their minds, animals and plants are placed at a lower level absolutely incapable of acting on man by itself. Plants are thought to act only insofar as they appear capable of attracting, of holding like storage cells, the vital force emanated from the gods.

/193 cont./

778 824 A currently widespread idea about animism would lead one to think, for example, that before felling a tree a Refugee Black addresses words and offerings to it. That is entirely absent from his thought: either this tree is likely to serve as support for a god, in which case it can be touched only after complex rites having the aim of transferring the god elsewhere, or it is simply a tree, and one cuts it down without further ado.

784 825 One very clear aspect of these conceptions is the dagu kunu, a curse resulting from the killing of a dog. Any animal may be killed with impunity but not a dog, because "a dog is almost a man."

[613] At the opposite extreme from the true kunu, a curse extending to a whole lineage, the dagu kunu applies only to the guilty person and draws only limited misfortunes upon him.

[772] No feeling whatever with respect to the dog enters into this conception, but only the idea that he is placed on a particular plane, near the plane of the human and his level of force.

776 /194/ The Great Gods

The Boni recognize a supreme God, Nana (1), more

1. This term comes from the Agni.

commonly called Masa Gadu, and Kedi Amu, Kediampon in Kumenti language. He created the lower gods and all that lives on the earth.

773 Here is how the old Boni men relate the myth of the creation of the world:

God created a brother and sister, Adam and Efa. They were twins. He put them in a place where they lived happily without working. But he forbade them to touch the fruit of the custard-apple tree.

/201 cont./

--In 1952, Dolo (Awara Bakka) dies almost all of a sudden with the symptoms of peritonitis: kunu, punishment for incest committed by another member of the lineage.

--In 1952, Maïèndo, ten years old, son of Osaya (Awara Bakka) accidentally drowns: natural accident (ŋgɔɔku).

--In 1954, Bèniti (Dju) dies at nearly 75 years of age: kunu of a Papa gadu.

--In 1954, Agyémési (Aw.B.) dies almost all of a sudden: killed by Odun (he was a wisimã).

--In 1955, Tabiki (Awara Bakka) dies at over 80: natural illness.

--In 1955, Kotoida /sic/ (Afi lineage) dies suddenly, aged about 50: kunu of a yɔrka.

--In 1957, F... (Lapé) is gravely ill with symptoms of typhoid: kunu of a Papa gadu.

--In 1957, Sokodo (Dip. II) dies at 40: kunu of a Kãntamasu.

/232/ One observes that in the 15 cases cited here, the kunu interferes ten times, while in three cases natural causes: illness, accident, were assumed.

In reality, the Refugee Blacks do not have the conception of a natural world, subject to known or knowable laws, which is set against a supernatural world. The intervention of a Papa gadu is neither more nor less natural than an illness or an accident. There is only, on the plane of human life, more or less frequent intervention by suprahuman forces. The intervention of these forces is made according to laws which embrace the totality of beings and things, laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge.

791 /237 cont./
688 Not just anyone may resort to divination on behalf of
888 someone else: only the eldest have the right to do it, and it has happened that the grand man punished offenders severely.

777 Fate. The Refugee Blacks do not attribute all misfortunes
[752] to suprahuman causes. They have the notion of natural accident, ɔ̃ŋgɔɔku. They say ɜŋgɔɔku miti mi, or again ogi miti mi,
[761] misfortune met me. They also accept the idea of natural death. They usually regard as natural death that of the very old, the infirm from birth, and sickly children.

[787] Divination blames fate in ten to 20 per cent of accidents.
[752] It is the usual explanation for hunting accidents.

• 772 /238/ Magic Forces

As we have shown, the Refugee Blacks consider beings and things as a world of forces capable of acting on one another, outside of time and space, according to laws which men cannot understand but of which they believe they have a partial and empirical knowledge transmitted by tradition since the
754 time of the ancestors. They distinguish negative magic forces,
789 wisi, which have the effect of diminishing the vital force of men, which makes them sick or kills them, and positive magic forces, ɔbia, which come from the gods: the ɔbia comes to increase the vital force of men, giving them protection, immunity, or knowledge. But no power is in essence a principle of good or evil; nothing is impossible for him who knows the formulas; this is why the magic of the Refugee Blacks is reduced to a perpetual and indecisive struggle between ɔbia and wisi.

754 Wisi. Wisi is sorcery in the African sense of the term, that is,
[673] the use of magic procedures to harm others; wisi is for the Refugee Blacks the pre-eminently criminal act, at the same time against morals and against society. The struggle against